

Chapter 46

Rye Day 47

The putrid scent of cat hair, which now filled our camp, burned the insides of my nostrils. Why the fuck did we take them in? Who's shitty idea was that? Now we had more mouths to feed, not to mention deal with the horrible stench. On top of that, the Kreq had never even fired an arrow, so it would probably be days before they could even be semi-useful. *Great.*

I made my way to the pyre where Meelo's body had been placed after Seq and some tiger dragged it back to camp. *Fuck that.* If Meelo had been my fuck-buddy, I would have cut the balls off any Kreq that tried to come near his body.

As I neared the pyre, I noticed that not only were the Kyan keeping vigil, but some Kreq, too. Maybe they felt sorry for all the shit they gave Meelo his entire life and were trying to make up for it. *Good luck with that.*

It surprised me when Seq didn't move or even speak when I sat myself down next to him. We were so close to the pyre that I could have hit Meelo's body with a rock. Seq seemed to be taking Meelo's death pretty hard. Although, he wasn't crying, so I guessed the two of them weren't as close as he had told me. *I knew it! He said that they were in love and shit, but I knew better! Oh, well. At least Meelo got a nice couple of fucks these past moons before he kicked it.* If Seq needed somebody to talk to, I was ready. It was why I even bothered putting on clothes and showing up in the first place. Seq's fling was over and now it was time to patch things up between us. I had missed the fox for far too long.

I actually felt kind of sorry for Meelo. He wasn't the most annoying person I had ever met. But what was done was done. Still, I wondered what went through his mind as he died. Was he worried about Seq? Did he have any regrets? Surely he must have been scared of dying.

Glancing over at Seq, I noticed that his eyes still didn't even hold a single trace of tears. His crying never really bothered me before. I just acted like it did. Seeing Seq cry always made me admire him. It takes serious balls to let yourself be vulnerable with somebody like that, letting them see your eyes get red and your face get all ugly. Just thinking about crying in front of somebody else in general makes me cringe. I never understood how he did it, but seeing him so dry-eyed like that left an uneasy feeling in my stomach. It wasn't like him. Why was I worried, though? I had Seq back and life was good.

"How you holding up?" I asked, breaking the silence.

He didn't respond at first and I thought he wasn't going to say anything at all. My thoughts were proven wrong a moment later when he finally did speak. "Like my boyfriend just died,"

Ouch. Okay. At least he was speaking to me. "Want to talk about it?"

Again, he was quiet at first, but spoke after a quick silence. "Why is it, that when somebody dies, it feels like they're not dead yet, like they're still hovering right beside you, but you just can't see them?"

I thought about it for a heartbeat. I remembered my parents and when they...
"Maybe it's just our minds still getting used to them being dead,"

Seq grunted. It wasn't a great response, but I was just happy he hadn't gotten up and left. *Progress.*

I scooted closer to him and our shoulders were now almost touching. He didn't tell me to back the fuck off, so I stayed where I was. His eyes still hung to the snow leopard's body before us. "You know I'm here for you, right?"

Softly, Seq lowered his head to the side and rested it on my shoulder.
"Thanks,"

I grinned. *I'll give it a moon before he's back in my hut and moaning my name.*

Then, he said something that slapped the grin right off my face. "I never got to tell him 'I love you' one last time...even when he was dying,"

Great. He was still on that whole love mess? How long would it take for him to realize they were just fooling around? *I swear to Taiya.*

"Rye?" Seq asked.

I turned my head and looked at him. "Yeah?"

"I'm glad you're my friend,"

Friend. The word burned my insides with rage. I didn't want to be his fucking friend! I wanted to be his boyfriend! Did he just see me as somebody he could hang out with? Why couldn't I be the one to hold him and listen to him as we drifted off to sleep together at night? I wanted him. My soul cried out for him to just be next to me and whisper into my ears. I wanted him to love me! I wanted him to love me like he loved... *No. That can't be.*

I wanted him to love me like he did Meelo.

He...loved that stupid leopard? They weren't just jerking each other off? They actually had a relationship? I saw the way they went to the lake and how they fooled around. There couldn't have been anything more to their relationship than that. How? How could he love somebody else over me, especially Meelo? What made him so much better? Why was he so fucking special?

Then everything came bursting through my mind like a flash of lightning. Seq wasn't crying, which was strange because he cried when his dad died and when he caught me in bed with Basil. His voice, it wasn't the high enthusiastic one he normally spoke with, either. I had seen this before, the emotionally hardened stare that bore no tears and the steady voice that had little inflection when speaking. It was unmistakable and I nearly screamed when I realized what Seq had become.

Me.

Seq was just like me now. Everything about him was a reflection of myself. His attitude and how he spoke all showed me that we were now the same. *But how? How did this happen?*

I gazed over at the dead snow leopard in front of me. Now it all made sense. Seq and Meelo weren't just having some fling. They loved each other. It was the only explanation. I knew that Seq must have loved Meelo, because he became just as hollow as I was. *Oh, Seq.* I wanted to kiss him and take him home, so he could love me again. That was all I ever truly wanted.

But now it seemed just like some foolish dream. I knew that Seq wasn't ever going to kiss me or be my boyfriend again because he loved somebody else. Meelo.

He loved Meelo and, now that Meelo was gone, I knew he would never love anybody else, just as though I could only ever love him. I suddenly was overcome with the urge to switch spots with Meelo. I would gladly have taken his spot on the pyre if it meant that Seq would still be happy. I would much rather be dead and have Seq happy, than be alive and watch Seq twist into a reflection of what I was. That was never what I wanted. Never. Yet, there he was, broken beyond repair. And, unlike the tools on the desk in my hut, I could not fix him by picking up the pieces. Nobody could. He would never be happy again, even if I were there for him everyday. His life would be an empty void and I couldn't do a damn thing about it.

“Thanks for being here,” Seq said.

“Oh,” I said. “Sure. What are friends for?”

And, for the first time in what seemed like an eternity, I couldn't think of a single dirty joke.

The End